



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE AESTHETIC SIDE OF COOKERY

BY PHILIP ROBERT DILLON

"**M**ADAME ATHÈNE, I congratulate you on your apple pie. It is surpassing."

I said it sincerely. She shrugged her shoulders. Madame Athène is pretty and under forty. She spoke with careless contempt. "Any one makes pie. It is not worth while to speak of it."

I was surprised and wounded. The editor and the sculptor, who were seated at the dinner table with me—making four of us, politely smiled.

Madame Athène is exceedingly intellectual. She truly worships Matthew Arnold and the later Russian novelists and painters. Also she adores Amiel and Ibsen, and strongly approves Woodrow Wilson's literary style. Furthermore she holds that Mrs. Pankhurst is a very great woman. All this is to say that her intellectuality is well colored by the spiritual and romantic.

She cooks a fine dinner now and then.

But disinclined to be thus suppressed by her, I inquired with some asperity: "Do you mean to say that an intellectual woman is not truly and properly complimented when an intelligent man openly expresses admiration, or even moderate and sincere approval of her pie, or of any dish she has cooked for him?"

She looked at the three of us with cynical indulgence. Cryptically she answered with her own question:

"What is the value of a compliment from a well-fed man?"

"You mean to insinuate that we who like good cooking and admire good cooks—artists of the kitchen—are beasts!" I said it nonchalantly.

The sculptor smiled again his illumining smile, and Benington, the editor, fixedly stared at his final morsel of cheese.

She thrust back scornfully: "It is your so-called 'artists' of the kitchen that make men into pigs. May be you will tell me that Gargantua is a high type because he had an enormous capacity for eating, and an appreciation of cooks. I doubt not that the minds of most of you so-called intellectuals are in the kitchen, even when you sit in a cathedral!"

Helplessly I appealed to Benington: "Chevalier, defend us!"

"Yes" she cried, "let Mr. Benington try to prove that the cook who fills his stomach and the cook who fills the stomach of a Gargantua are 'artists'. No doubt he can well imitate the sophistry of the favorite of all of you, the indecent Rabelais!"

The sculptor chuckled exultingly, saying not a word. Now Chevalier Arthur Benington, decorated by the King of Italy, editor, littérateur and linguist, is admittedly one of the half dozen men who are superlatively competent critics of a dinner. He is a serious man and a serious writer. His dominant recreations are lecturing on Dante and analyzing motifs of menus. The members of the Press Club and the Italian Club listen with profound reverence when he talks of meats, fish, desserts and sauces. That a man talks profoundly well about Dante, and also about spaghetti is a matter of moment in New York. Thus Benington.

"Madame" he began with deep feeling "I pass

by your disdainful allusion to Rabelais, who was a great literary artist and psychologist. I give you my sincerest admiration because you are a creative pie-artist and I truly regard you as greater because of your pie than because of your knowledge of Ibsen and Thomas à Kempis. While art in its highest forms may appeal to the intellect". . . .

"No! It is an appeal to the soul!" interrupted the sculptor.

"I accept the correction if it pleases you. Then, while art may be an appeal to the soul some forms of art must make their appeal through the senses, and there are many forms of art that do appeal only to the senses. Is this not so, Madame?"

"Well, I will not deny that" said the lady.

"We have five senses, and there is no more reason to despise what appeals to one sense than there is to despise that which appeals to another. The painter, the sculptor, the architect reaches us through our sense of sight. The musician ravishes our sense of hearing. The man who draws the perfume from the lily and the lilac and the rose and stores them for us in essences or powders enchants us through our sense of smell. Our sense of touch has been neglected by artists, though not by nature; yet surely the man who makes a soft, smooth garment that pleases the skin is also an artist in his way.

"Our sense of taste is the artistic dominion of the cook, and he who can give us real pleasure by his skill and his imagination in cookery is truly an artist. A highly intellectual friend of mine—and formerly an English diplomat—says that it takes a *gentleman* to be a real cook, and he puts the accent on the *man* because he believes no woman can ever attain to real artistic eminence therein, pointing out that no woman has ever been a superlatively great artist. . . . But let me have my say!"

"How about Rosa Bonheur in painting animals and Madame Lebrun in painting portraits and Madame Ristori in acting?" said Madame Athène.

"Well" answered Benington "Rosa Bonheur was nearly a man and the rest were not superlatively great.

"The greatest books on gastronomy have been written by men of intellectual eminence. The greatest of them all—the 'Physiologie du Gout'—is the work of the famous French physician Brillat-Savarin. The best and most recent in the English language is by Fink, musical critic of the *New York Evening Post*. And, almost always highly intellectual men have been great epicures. Disraeli, when asked how he would like to die, replied: 'Eating ortolans stuffed with truffles, to the sound of soft music.' Charles Lamb's 'Essay on Roast Pig' is a classic. And don't forget that Lucullus was one of the greatest generals who ever lived. And then Madame, you spoke about men of taste being gourmants."

"Yes, I did."

"Well" said he, with a twinkle in his eye "suppose you substitute the word *gourmet* for *gourmant*. You know the difference, don't you?"

"Not exactly; there is a distinction without a

difference in my eyes" she replied with a toss of her head.

"Well, you know that *gourmant* means to uncritically overeat, and *gourmet* means to be sparing and critical in our eating?" was the Benington riposte.

"O, yes! But go on, finish your argument."

"I will, if you will let me" said the Chevalier, resuming. "When Rossini, the great composer and Dumas the great novelist used to spend an evening together, as they often did, what was the subject of their conversation? Macaroni and ways of cooking it! Their united intellects invented a sauce with which they used to fill each individual tube of macaroni, injecting it with a hot syringe just before they put the delectable morsel into their mouths.

"In the Spring Academy exhibitions of New York you may now and then see charming landscapes signed Lattard. The artist is none other than Monsieur Nestor Lattard, maitre d'hôtel of the Plaza Hotel, who is as proud of some of the dishes he has invented as he is of his paintings.

"Some women who have been brought up in Puritanical homes have had the artistic side of their natures sadly neglected. In consequence they despise—or affect to despise, for it is often affectation—everything that appeals only to what they call the senses. They are accustomed to regard some senses as 'grosser' than others, though why one sense should be exalted and another be debased, beats me. Each of the five senses is as honorable as any of its sisters. All are godgiven and no one has a right to look down upon the handiwork of the Creator. The Divine Maker of the Universe thought enough of man's sense of taste to provide for its enjoyment by placing flavors in fruits and spices, in the flesh of birds and fish and animals, in the stalks and leaves of plants. The men and women who are skilled in combining these flavors, producing new ones, blending cheese and eggs or flour and milk and sugar in soups that enchant our palates are artists of the highest type. It takes rare intelligence and exquisite refinement to do these things well.

"Isn't that true?"

"Profoundly" said the sculptor.

"Cookery is not only a fine art, but the most necessary of the fine arts. Life might be gray and sad without painting and music, but we could at least live without them. It might be uncomfortable without architecture, but there are still caves for the winter and forests for the summer. But without cookery we should die.

"Doctors tell us that flavor is even more necessary than quality to good digestion. They have proved that agreeable flavor causes a flow of the gastric juices. Insipid food is not digested nearly so well as that which is delicious. So cookery is the handmaid of health. The cook is the physician's most valuable assistant.

"Inventing novel combinations of food, tempting the appetite, gratifying the sense of taste, giving real pleasure to discriminating persons, supplying what will nourish the frame, stimulate the mind and preserve the body in good health, is a labor that is surely well worthy of an intellectual person—man or woman—for it can be done well by none other." So Benington finished.

"There you struck the crux of the matter—inventing a new dish" interjected the sculptor.

Madame Athène had listened keenly, with intermittent flashes of defiance in her eyes and slight nods of approval. Her excellent vanity was evidently soothed somewhat by Benington's seriousness, and of course she accepted the compliment to her intellect, though not to her pie.

"Now" said I to her confidently "you are convinced!"

"Convinced?" loftily. "Convinced!" witheringly. She turned to Benington and rejoined:

"I object to your entire point of view. You are a mere Hedonist, frankly preaching the gospel of pleasure, and physical pleasure at that. Hedonism is dangerous. You are advocating refined gluttony. You may hide your gluttony in nice words, but still you are a Hedonist. Your point of view is vicious. You set up as an idol in your temple the gratification of the senses! Our five senses are purely physical and are an eternal drag on the soul—as Thomas à Kempis would say. Civilization is essentially a getting away from the animal—not, of course, by martyrizing the body like Simeon Stylites or the extreme devotees of Hindoostan. But the tendency of catering to the senses is to lead mankind back to Tophet, from which we have risen through suffering, tears and self-control—self-control that Herbert Spencer says is man's highest achievement.

"As for Rossini, had he paid less attention to spaghetti, his rare soul would have given us more of the sublime music of 'William Tell' and the 'Stabat Mater.' I fear his soul became enmeshed in endless strands of macaroni. These bouts in epicurean spaghetti with his friend Dumas you tell about left their deadening marks on his genius. Certainly he did nothing after 'William Tell' and the 'Stabat Mater.' Was it not because his soul became enmeshed and materialized by visions of sensuous gratification that he fell into spiritual sterility?

"Now, he and she who, by a sensuous physical Hedonism sterilizes himself and herself spiritually, are more immoral than they who atrophy themselves physically, because spiritual creation is the test of the morality of a man or woman upon earth.

"And, as a matter of fact" she added carelessly "your senses are not equal by any spiritual or even intellectual measure. Who ever heard of a man getting drunk on too much good music or sculpture or painting? But your Monsieur Lattard with one of his fine dinners may knock your intellectual *gourmand* into stupidity. In short" she concluded regally "your whole argument is that of the *gourmand* and the *gourmand* is only an intellectual pig!"

"Bravo!" cried the sculptor.

I was astonished at him. I spoke, being grieved: "You, an apostle of art, you, whom I have seen ravished by a fine dish, you that can cook a fine dinner—have you recanted your oft-expressed belief that cookery is a fine art?"

Let us recall that the sculptor is one of the oldest and best-known sculptors in America. Therefore, what he said about cookery as a fine art is interesting, for his friends also rank him as a dinner-table epicure. He answered quietly:

"I have recanted nothing."

"Then, do you now consider cookery a fine art?"

"Rather!"

"Prove it."

"You remind me of a remark of Voltaire: 'If you wish to converse with me, define your terms.' What do you mean by Art?"

"Well—eh—what do *you* mean by art?"

"Let's see: Art is an expression of human emotion. The man who expresses his own emotions is already an artist. But the man who is able to arouse the emotions of his fellow men is a greater artist—assuming the technical skill of both to be the same.

"Now, if when you are in Paris again you go with the poor artist to Monsieur Binet, wine merchant, Avenue de Vaugirard, and call for a *sole frite*, you will get a sole fried in lard, and it will satisfy every craving of your hunger. That dish will not be a work of art. Why? Because no *invention* of the cook, no imagination, nothing spiritual will have been put in the dish. And as Bacon said: 'Art is man *added* to Nature.' There will be nothing lifting in the devouring of that contrapted dish. It will be a merely material munching of fish meat, after which the mind and soul will be on the same plane as before—perhaps a lower one, satisfied though the body may be.

"If then you go next day to Monsieur Marguery, artist-restaurateur, Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, and ask for a *sole frite*, you will get the same kind of a fish, but the dish will be a work of Art. Why? Because the fish will not have been fried in fat but prepared in a mysterious way and covered with a pink-yellow sauce so delectable in odor and taste as to make it fit to be served at the Banquet of the World.

"And, after savoring that dish, you will be lifted into a higher plane of feeling. Why? Because not only will your senses have been charmed by the flavor of the fish and the spiritualized sauce, and the mind delighted by the perception of the difference of skill manifested by the common cook and the culinary artist, but the Soul also will be filled with a truly lifting emotion occasioned by the color combination of spotless table-linen, artistic glasses, blue dishes, brownish fish, pink-yellow sauce, the latter sending forth an odor so exquisite that you will feel yourself transfigured in the presence of a delectable invention of a creative artist in cookery.

"Yesterday your stomach was satisfied and your purely physical emotions aroused by Monsieur Binet; to-day your soul—if you have one—will be exalted to a higher plane of emotion. The earth will no longer appear a porkopolis in a vale of tears, but an Elysium in the skies, if but for an hour—that is—if you are a real man and have imagination enough to know the difference between poetry and putty. Thenceforth life will never be the same on an Earth transfigured by an exalting experience from a materialistic morass to an anteroom of Paradise. It is the lifting power of a common fish made spiritual, because touched by the poetic imagination of Marguery who dreamed out his divine sauce—which sauce alone makes his dish a true and dynamic, because exalting, work of Art. As Burton said in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* 'Cookery is become an art, a noble science; cooks are Gentlemen!'

"And that is why the government of the most

enlightened race on earth made Marguery a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. He was a benefactor of his people, because he added to the prestige of his country. He put his spiritual self into his sauce—a creation unnecessary for any material use as men's food—and thus poetized the fish, while Monsieur Binet remained just Binet, because, failing to see the poetic possibilities of cooking, he dished up his *sole* in mere fat.

"Binet never became a culinary artist, capable of inventing a delectable dish, and always will remain just a common cook. It is not the parrot-like imitative woman who makes common soggy pie whom we think worthy of being praised. It is the woman—or was it a man—who first invented the perfect apple pie? who dug out of her inner consciousness the idea of the pie—she it is who deserves a monument as truly as Michelangelo.

"Because the difference between an unimaginative woman cook and artist in cookery is a spiritual difference—an affair of Poetry. And your pie of this evening at least, Madame Athène, is not a common pie; it surpasses any I have eaten for many a day, because it is also different from any other apple pie I ever ate. Hence it has an individuality as apple pie, in addition to being very delicious. And did you observe that I refused a second piece?"

"I wondered why, after your praising it so highly."

"I refused it because like a true *gourmet* and devotee of the poetic in all things I ate just enough to arouse in me a delectable emotion and would not spoil it, like a *gourmant*, by eating enough to dull that emotion!

"That, you see, is not physical Hedonism in your meaning, it is a poetic spiritual Hedonism, the most constructive and lifting philosophy of life ever dreamed out by men."

She flashed a quizzical look at me and then softened, smiled at the sculptor and said hesitatingly: "I like what you say. But of course it has no application to my work in cooking this dinner. Even admitting that Marguery may be an artist because he *invented* a sauce, I am still in the ranks of the mechanics. I did not *invent* pie." . . .

"Ah!" the sculptor stopped her "there you have approached a truth that seems unknown to the great body of the public and even to artists themselves. I mean that there is a definite, clear distinction between the artist and the mechanic and an easy rule to express the distinction. I refer you to my definition of a work of art—the definition which has had some publicity. I will repeat it:

"Every human work made in any language with a purpose of expressing or stirring human emotion is a work of art; and a work of art is great in ratio of its power of stirring the highest emotions of the largest number of cultured people for the longest period of time.

"Now, the person who first dreamed out, imagined into form an apple pie must have had some emotion of joy in the moment when the *idea* of the pie became complete, and the process of realizing the actual pie, in the making of it, must have given that person some joy at seeing the pie take form in a finished work—a *complete invention*. It is this

expression of emotion of joy by the original *inventor* of the pie which made that pie already a work of Art and the pie-maker an artist.

"Finally, as your pie was not only an avenue for the *expression of your own* emotions but *aroused our* emotions by its super-excellence, and also by its unusual and individual taste, it is doubly a work of art, and so puts you truly in the class of artists—culinary artists, if you will."

I had at least learned to keep silent and only watched her. She *was* pleased. I am tempted to say she was transfigured, becoming again her normal, seductive feminine self, or that she was chemically changed back to the woman who wins by that mystic amalgamation of chemistry and spirit. And in this state she said with that way of woman that thrills: "Perhaps it was a good pie."

She had the last word.

Philip Robert Dillon

BEYOND

Colossal orb of space,
Sparkling with diamond
Of countless star on star,
All whirling with wild grace
In their enwoven dance
Illimitably far—
What lies beyond
Your vastly hollow girdled by that bright
River of stellar spray
We call the Milky Way?
Immeasurable ball,
Compassed and clasped in light,
Can you be all
A flock of fireflies circling in the night,
A maze of jewels that the toss of Chance
Let fall,
Sun, planet, asteroid,
One globe of glories in the utter void?

What lies beyond?
Does the sheer Dark immerse
Infinity, drowning the last faint gold
Of fleeting comets, lost and vagabond?
Or is this astral universe,
All that our utmost vision may behold,
But one amidst a host of star-strewn spheres,
Each zoned with its own stream
Of softer gleam,
Perchance each dowered with wonder, love and
tears?

What lies beyond?
The puny human heart still stirs
Against those flaming barriers,
That proud, impenetrable dome
Of fire and ether, seeking for a home,
A Soul that shall respond
To all its questions, longings and despairs.
Is space but raiment that the Spirit wears,
A gem-embroidered mantle to conceal
And yet reveal
In splendors of surprise
Beauty ineffable,
Immanuel?
Or shall we rise,
Higher than dream of Dante ever trod
From star to star, from empyrean on
To empyrean, till the sun that shone
Over our vexed mortality be wan,
Through life on life, eternal range
From form to form, from change to change,
To find the Unknown God?

Katherine Lee Bates